

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
20 APRIL 1983

By ROBERT SHEPARD
WASHINGTON
Covert

Members of the House Intelligence Committee questioned Secretary of State George Shultz for three hours Wednesday in an effort to find out if the administration is illegally aiding Nicaraguan rebels.

CIA Director William Casey also was called to the Capitol, but the committee was not able to get to him during the late afternoon closed session. House Democratic leader Jim Wright of Texas indicated Casey probably would return Thursday to meet with the committee.

Wright said the committee members had agreed not to make any statements about what was said during the meeting, but would report their conclusion later. He did say Shultz was "very open, very candid" in responding to committee members' questions.

"We covered a lot of ground," Wright said. "The subject has been exclusively Nicaragua and Central America, what is happening there, what our people are attempting to do."

Earlier in the day, Sen. Barry Goldwater, chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, said the Reagan administration was not violating a congressional ban on aid to Nicaraguan rebels, and he criticized members of Congress for suggesting otherwise.

"The president is not violating any restrictions of the Boland amendment," the Arizona Republican declared in a speech on the Senate floor.

The ban on covert aid -- called the Boland amendment, after Rep. Edward Boland, D-Mass., chairman of the House Intelligence Committee -- was enacted last December. It bars the CIA and the Defense Department from providing funds or equipment to groups trying to overthrow the leftist government of Nicaragua.

But several members of Congress have charged recently the administration is secretly aiding guerrilla forces now operating inside Nicaragua.

In his speech, Goldwater criticized other members of Congress "who do not have all the facts," but who make "wild political statements about our government breaking the law."

Two weeks ago, other members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence invited other senators to read a classified report on the situation in Nicaragua, but Goldwater said only one senator had asked to see the report.

"Anyone who bothered to learn the facts about Central America" would find "they all show clearly there is no intent to overthrow the government of Nicaragua."

CONTINUED